CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 March 2001, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Juan Enrique Vega (Chile)

GE.01-60735 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 868th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, I should like warmly to welcome, on behalf of the Conference, Ambassador Eui-Yong Chung, the newly appointed permanent representative of the Republic of Korea. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Ambassador and to convey my best wishes for his work in this Conference and I look forward to close cooperation with him.

On my list I have the Ambassador of Belgium, Mr. Jean Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on acceding to what is a thankless but nonetheless fascinating position as President of the Conference. Please be assured that you can rely on full cooperation from Belgium in your endeavour to bring the Conference out of its three-year-old impasse.

I take the floor today as the co-chair of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Landmines, otherwise known as the Ottawa Convention. Today's date - 1 March - is of particular significance for the Convention, since it marks the second anniversary of its entry into force, the fortieth ratification - that of Burkina Faso - having occurred on 1 March 1999. To date, with the recent ratification by Zambia, 111 States have ratified the Convention. Needless to say, this shows the remarkable progress achieved by the Convention in moving towards universal status and, in this context, I would like to encourage all States not yet parties to the Convention to ratify or accede to it as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your statement and for the kind remarks addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? There are no other speakers on my list for today and no other delegation wishes to take the floor.

Distinguished delegates, as you know since I took office as President, I have been holding intensive consultations with many of the delegations here. I have not yet completed this task and I intend to continue it next week. So far my efforts to come up with a consensus programme for this Conference have been to no avail. I must also be very candid and concede that the chances of getting this consensus are very slim. I am, however, making every effort to discharge the mandate I have been given, which is to take the proposal by Ambassador Amorin - the so-called "Amorin proposal" - as the basis for our current intensive consultations. To date I have no news for you, however. I hope that next week we shall be able to get to work and that I will be able to give you a detailed and precise report on the course of these consultations and on their outcome. At that time we shall see the measure of our success and, if there is no success, can decide what our next steps should be.

That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 8 March 2001, at 10 a.m.